UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
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December 9, 2014

Mr. George Tahu
Planetary Science Division
Science Mission Directorate
NASA Headquarters, Mail Suite 3E46
Washington, D.C. 20546-0001

RE: Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Mars 2020 Mission – Tier 2; NAS-A12042-00; CEQ No.: 20140324

Dear Mr. Tahu:

Consistent with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Clean Air Act (CAA) § 309 and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) § 102 (2)(C) responsibilities, EPA has reviewed the above identified FEIS.

Background

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) is proposing to launch an expendable launch vehicle in 2020 with a large, mobile science laboratory with advanced instrumentation to continue in-depth exploration on the surface of Mars.

The FEIS presented descriptions of the proposed Mars 2020 mission, spacecraft, and candidate launch vehicles; an overview of the affected environment at or near the launch site and globally; and the potential environmental consequences associated with the proposed action and alternatives. The proposed Mars 2020 Mission builds upon the discoveries made from previous Mars missions, including the Mars Science Laboratory rover (Curiosity) and the two Mars Exploration Rovers (Spirit and Opportunity). The FEIS evaluated 3 alternatives and the No Action alternative.

The FEIS describes three action alternatives and the No Action alternative. NASA's preferred alternative is Alternative 1 which utilizes a radioisotope system to power the Mars rover battery. The proposed Mars 2020 spacecraft would be launched on board an expendable launch vehicle from Kennedy Space Center (KSC) or Cape Canaveral Air Force Station (CCAFS), Brevard County, Florida, during a 20-day launch opportunity that runs from July through August 2020, and would be inserted into a trajectory toward Mars. Should the mission be delayed, the proposed Mars 2020 mission would be launched during the next available launch opportunity in August through September 2022. The rover proposed for the Mars 2020 mission

would utilize a radioisotope power system to continually provide heat and electrical power to the rover's battery so that the rover could operate and conduct science on the surface of Mars.

EPA Comments:

EPA comments on the DEIS dated, 11 July 2014 were adequately addressed in the FEIS. Our concerns with the radioisotope system used in the proposed action as NASA's preferred alternative have been addressed as well. Your response to EPA's request, to include action items identified in the FEIS for the emergency planning, as indicated in Section 2.1.7 and 4.1.5, should be included in the Record of Decision (ROD) is adequate.

EPA requests a copy of the Final EIS and Record of Decision when they become available. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments. Should you have any questions, please contact Mr. Larry Gissentanna at 404-562-8248 or via email gissentanna.larry@epa.gov .

Sincerely,

Heinz J. Mueller, Chief
NEPA Program Office